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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000271

SIPDIS
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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, DAS BRYZA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2034

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#) [RU](#)

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: TURKISH AMBASSADOR AND DAS BRYZA
DISCUSS POST-ARMENIA RECONCILIATION PROSPECTS AND ENERGY

REF: BAKU 258 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Anne Derse, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S/NF) Summary. Ambassador Derse hosted EUR DAS Matthew Bryza and Turkish Ambassador Kilic at dinner Friday April 3, following her and DAS Bryza's meetings with President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov, the latter accompanied by Deputy Minister Araz Azimov. Kilic was extremely anxious to know how Aliyev had responded to Bryza's proposals and offers of intensified US engagement on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), which were aimed at demonstrating that Azerbaijan's interests would not be sold out by Turkey's finalizing an agreement with Armenia to, inter alia, reopen the border between them for the first time since 1993. Kilic also detailed his strenuous efforts to secure Aliyev's attendance at the Istanbul-based Alliance of Civilizations Summit and hinted that Turkey may be inclining its energy policy to be more sensitive to its effect on its bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. Kilic also strenuously asked that the United States keep pressure on Armenia to negotiate in good faith after the border-opening agreement. End Summary.

Pres. Aliyev and the N-K Angle

12. (S/NF) DAS Bryza told Kilic that he had come to Baku at the urging of FonMin Mammadyarov (Reftel) to explore with President Aliyev how much progress on N-K would be necessary to convince him that the GOAM will still need to negotiate in good faith after it signs the accord with Turkey. First and foremost, Bryza emphasized that Secretary Clinton's personal interest in the issue at this critical juncture is exactly the high-profile engagement that the GOAJ has been seeking for sometime. Aliyev clearly hoped for a full accord on the Minsk Group Basic Principles, or alternatively an Armenian withdrawal from part of the territory it occupies surrounding N-K. However, Bryza pressed on him the more realistic concept of using the May 7 meeting with Armenian President Sargsian to hammer out agreement on three of the four issues impeding the Basic Principles, leaving the fourth - i.e., the Lachin corridor, - for their June meeting in Moscow. With these issues solved, the way would be clear for an agreement on the Basic Principles to be signed on the sidelines of the G8 Summit, where all of the Presidents of the Minsk Group Co-chair countries would be present.

13. (S/NF) Bryza continued, saying that Aliyev personally agreed to work to make that scenario happen, but that the President was doubtful that Sargsian would really feel compelled to do his own part. Later, FonMin Mammadyarov and his deputy Araz Azimov would characteristically take a tougher line, suggesting that Turkey should delay opening the border once the four preliminary questions on the Basic Principles are agreed if Armenia does not appear to be

negotiating in good faith.

14. (S/NF) Ambassador Kilic said that Prime Minister Erdogan's statement from the G-20 Summit that a "healthy solution with Armenia" would not be found while the N-K issue remains unsettled is a message to both sides that Turkey is not selling its ally out, but he added that "we (Turkey) gain nothing by waiting" to move forward with the agreement. Kilic also said that Turkish public opinion is just beginning to form about the normalization and it will be important to the Turkish people to look out for Azerbaijan's interests. Bryza separately observed that Sargsian is himself a bit ahead of public opinion, however he observed that this situation fits perfectly Sargsian's preference for bold policies. Bryza and Kilic both agreed that September 2009 was a reasonable surmise as to when the border might open.

15. (S/NF) Thinking out loud, Kilic worried about the potential Russian response to the impending agreement. DAS Bryza observed that for Russia there was much to like about a reconciled Turkey and Armenia, especially considering that if Armenia had another open border, then whatever leverage Georgia gained from being Armenia's conduit to the outside world would be lost. Furthermore, Moscow would likely see Azerbaijan's displeasure with Turkey as an opportunity to recruit Azerbaijan to its side on a range of issues.

Turkey - Trying to Keep Aliyev On Board

16. (S/NF) Kilic said he had been working desperately to keep President Aliyev on the guest list for the Istanbul Alliance of Civilizations Summit, delaying his own departure for Turkey to do so. Despite the conscious freezing of his

BAKU 00000271 002 OF 002

access by the Azerbaijani MFA (Reftel), Kilic was using the head of the Azerbaijani State Protocol Service Elchin Bagirov, whom he came to know while serving as the protocol chief for the Turkish Prime Minister in 2005-06, as his channel to the presidential circle, urging Aliyev to attend as a way of maximizing his influence. (Note: During the dinner, both President Gul and Secretary Clinton would call Aliyev to urge him to attend. Gul suggested a four-way meeting with himself, POTUS, Erdogan and Aliyev at the summit. At the time, informal readouts on both sides were that Aliyev was noncommittal but had not categorically ruled out attendance, as local press relying on unofficial sources reported he had. End Note.)

Possible Change in Tone on Energy?

17. (S/NF) Kilic also told DAS Bryza that the commerce and energy advisor to the Turkish Parliament, Taner Yildiz, would meet with Erdogan before the 10th of April to brief him on Azerbaijani energy issues. Azerbaijan issues are getting new attention in the GOT. Yildiz had learned during recent meetings with (SOCAR President Rovnaq) Abdullayev and (Energy Minister Natiq) Aliyev about President Aliyev's disappointment at being unable to discuss energy issues in Erdogan at Davos. Yildiz tried, though it was unclear the extent to which he succeeded, to convey that Erdogan's reticence was due to not having been fully briefed and not to a desire to snub the Azerbaijanis.

18. (S/NF) DAS Bryza also observed that Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Turkish Prime Minister Hakan Fidan was also working to bring the Turkish MFA, Ministry of Energy and national gas monopoly BOTAS together to arrive at an approach to Azerbaijani energy issues that would better reflect the priority directions of Turkish foreign policy by fusing Turkey's strategic interest in the Southern Corridor with the tactical commercial and energy interests of BOTAS and the Ministry of Energy and Resources.

19. (U) DAS Bryza cleared this cable.
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